

LEAVING LAS VEGAS

by

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Adapted from the novel by John O'Brien

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**FOR EDUCATIONAL  
PURPOSES ONLY**

TITLE ON BLACK "10 PM - LOS ANGELES"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SMART BAR IN BEVERLY HILLS - NIGHT

It is the kind of bar where the well to do folks of LA go to pick up or be picked up. Lesser known actors, agents and executives of all ages. Into this bar comes BEN. BEN is in his thirties. He is wearing an Armani suit that could use a visit to the dry-cleaners. He hasn't shaved in the last 24 hours but neither have any of the actors in the bar. He is a good looking man but clearly he is in trouble of some kind. Although still in control of his faculties it becomes clear in the following scene that he much the worse for wear with drink. He looks around the room until he sees someone that he recognizes and then walks over to a table where two couples are seated. The men are young execs, the girls, both blonde and busty have very white teeth and smile all of the time. the camera follows BEN over to the table. One of the execs looks up as BEN gets close. He recognizes him but delays his recognition until the last moment in the hope that BEN is not looking at him.

BEN

Peter!

PETER

Ben...how are you man?

They shake hands. BEN is not invited to take a seat and PETER waits for a while before being forced to introduce him to the table.

PETER

(continuing)

Ben Sanderson, Marc Nussbaum, Sheila and Debbie.

MARC

Nice to meet you. I think i spoke to you on the phone a couple of years ago, weren't you both at MGM with Laddie?

BEN

That's right. Are you still at I.C.M?

MARC

No I'm at Tri-Star now.

BEN

That's great, say hello to Mike for me. That's a beautiful dress Debbie, and those are fabulous ear rings Sheila.

There is an awkward silence. BEN does not make a move and is not invited to join them. The girls smile.

MARC  
I gotta tell you, I'm a big fan of your writing. I loved "Bay of Pigs".

BEN  
Thanks a lot. I didn't actually write it, I just got the credit. I was fired.

(to PETER)  
Can I talk to you for a moment?

PETER gets up and he and BEN walk to the door together.

PETER  
Listen, Ben, I can't help you any more. Do you understand?

BEN  
This is the last time. Promise. I just need some cash tonight. I lost my credit cards. The money'll be on your desk first thing tomorrow morning, scout's honour. How's the new one coming along? I hear you got Richard Gere.

The two men look at each other for a while. PETER'S friends are looking at them as are other people in the room. PETER takes out his wallet and extracts some notes.

PETER  
This is all I have in cash. Please don't drink it here.

BEN  
Yes that's fine. I'll messenger it over to you tomorrow.

PETER  
I don't want it. Ben...I think it would be best if you didn't contact me again.

And he turns and walks away, back to his table.

CUT TO BLACK

CREDIT SEQUENCE BEGINS.

INT. ANOTHER LA BAR - NIGHT

BEN is sitting at the bar. He drinks a large glass of something very quickly and then immediately orders another.

CREDITS CONTINUE.....

He drinks this a little slower but still way too quick , finishes it and then orders another. He looks around the bar and sees a woman sitting by herself, 30ish, pretty and receptive. She looks and sees BEN and he smiles at her. She smiles right back and looks at her drink, slurps the ice to show that it is empty. BEN walks over to her.

BEN  
(charming)  
Good evening.

PRETTY WOMAN  
(pleased)  
Hi.

BEN  
I'm Benjamin...Ben.

PRETTY WOMAN  
I'm Teri.

She is pleased that this good looking man has come over to make a play. She makes a noise with her straw to indicate that her glass is empty.

BEN  
I'll get you another one...and me too. Mind if I join you?

She watches him walk to the bar.

CREDITS CONTINUE.....

He gets the drinks and walks back to her. He sets the drinks down on the table and sits down. As he does so his face gets close to hers and she smells the booze on him.

PRETTY WOMAN  
Wow...been drinking all day?

BEN  
But of course.

She looks at him, a disappointed expression on her face. She is no longer interested in being seduced by this man and this much is clear to BEN.

BEN  
(continuing)  
Why don't we finish these and go to  
my apartment on the beach.  
(she doesn't respond)  
We can watch a movie and I'll mix you  
up a gooey blender drink.

BEN winces at his own words. He shakes his head.

PRETTY WOMAN  
I have to get up pretty early  
tomorrow. I'll just finish this and  
go. Thanks anyway.

They drink in silence for a while. BEN takes a deep  
breath.

BEN  
(pathetic)  
I really wish that you'd come home  
with me. You're cute and I'm really  
good in bed...believe me...you smell  
good too..

He stops and frowns as he stares into his empty glass.

BEN  
(continuing)  
No, OK.

BEN tries to get up and has to pull himself up by holding  
the bar. It's a strange thing with drunks like BEN...when  
they're up they have balance and timing but when they're  
down it all falls apart. She starts to speak but then  
doesn't. A look of great sadness comes over her.

PRETTY WOMAN  
I have to go now. Thanks anyway.

She stands to go.

PRETTY WOMAN  
(continuing)  
Maybe you shouldn't drink so much.

She walks to the door and BEN turns to the bar watched by  
the BARMAN who is a little concerned.

BEN  
(to himself)  
Maybe I shouldn't breathe so much,  
Teri. Ha...ha

CREDITS CONTINUE...

BARMAN  
(severe voice)  
Time to go buddy...we're closing up.

BEN gets out his wallet but his hands are shaking so much that he cannot extract any bills. He is very embarrassed and tries again but to no avail.

BEN  
Would you....?

The BARMAN shakes his head in disgust as he goes into the wallet and takes some money

CUT TO BLACK

TITLE. "LAS VEGAS - 1.20 AM"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOBBY OF EXPENSIVE HOTEL - NIGHT.

A mixture of business men and gamblers create a sense of activity and superficial excitement. Although there is a lot of money here it is without taste or subtlety. muzac strings waft across the soundtrack.

CREDIT SEQUENCE ENDS

Into the lobby from the street comes SERA. It's hard to tell how old she is....somewhere between 25 and 35. She is a beautiful American girl. Her face has the freshness of a model in a Sears catalogue. She is simply dressed in a short black skirt and matching jacket. High heels complete the picture. Heads turn as she passes a group of business men and it's clear they find her very sexy. She acknowledges their glance with a half smile and steps into the elevator. She could be a secretary, or a PA to one of the many execs here in Las Vegas at a convention.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE OF HOTEL - NIGHT.

A view of night time LAS VEGAS through a window. Traffic up and down the strip, bright gaudy neon flashing and winking. We hear the sound of men laughing and the camera pulls focus and we see reflected in the glass...

A GROUP OF PEOPLE

On the table are bowls of potato chips and dip and sandwiches.

The tv is on at a sport channel and two black boxers pound the shit out of each other.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

SERA looks at herself in the gold tinted mirror in the elevator. She takes out a lipstick and freshens her lips. Some people get out and the elevator climbs higher. We see from the indicator that she has punched the PENTHOUSE button. Camera moves in tighter and we see that she is quite nervous but concealing it well. The elevator stops, the doors open and she steps right into the PENTHOUSE.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

A bottle of Scotch is almost empty. The man talking is GAMAL but we shall refer to him as AL from now on in. He is Arabic, in his early forties, a little overweight, a big man wearing a blue silk suit. His thick black hair is greased and combed back. He wears a lot of jewelry, all gold. Rings, a bracelet and a Rolex. Two men in business suits and a weirdish stoned woman in her late thirties listen to him.

AL  
(middle east accent)  
...but please, my friends, call me  
Al. It is my American name...I picked  
it myself.

The three people laugh. There is a hint of contempt in the way that they speak to AL.

FIRST BUSINESS MAN  
Where are you from Al? I mean, you  
sure don't talk like you're from this  
neck of the woods.

The room goes tense and AL smiles at them.

AL  
(silky voice)  
No...you are right my friend. How  
very observant you are. I am from  
Oman.

WEIRD WOMAN  
Tough place.

AL  
Yes, I hear this too. But I am not a tough man. I am a simple man who is here to learn from my new American friends.

SERA opens the door and comes into the room and evryone stares at her

WEIRD WOMAN  
(turned on)  
Is this your friend Al?

AL  
Ah yes...Sera.

The SECOND BUSINESS MAN takes out a manila envelope from his inside pocket.

AL  
(continuing)  
Sera is my gift to you, my friends from New York city. You may do with her as you wish in this beautiful room, which is also my gift for the night to my friends. You will find her a very willing girl for all of you...just as we arranged.

AL smiles again as the SECOND BUSINESS MAN hands him the envelope. The rest of them just stare at SERA, aroused by the idea of her.

SECOND BUSINESS MAN  
Of course Al. I think you'll find this just as we discussed.

AL gets up.

AL  
So my friends...I have other business to attend. Enjoy.

Al heads for the door, passing SERA. She holds his arm as he passes.

SERA  
(whispering)  
Al....please! Can I talk to you for a moment.

Still smiling, Al takes SERA'S arm and leads her into the bathroom.

AL

My friends...excuse us for just one moment.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The decor is very gaudy. Mirrors reflect mirrors.

SERA

I don't want this. Al, please. I really don't want this. You know I don't like to do groups.

AL

(playful)

I want this, Sera. I need this!

SERA

Please Al.

Al holds out his arms. SERA goes to him. He hugs her with one arm. He pulls up her skirt so that her panties are exposed.

AL

(seductive)

These are pretty.

SERA watches in the mirror as he pulls her panties aside to reveal her buttock. He strokes her buttock gently with his other hand. We see that there are two fine scars there, scars. He speaks gently, like a father to a daughter.

AL

(continuing)

Is this how you would repay me for coming all this way to find you again. Driving through the desert to protect my little Sera.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - SILENT - GRAINY BLACK AND WHITE

GAMAL and SERA - different time - different place.. SERA looking frightened, backing away from GAMAL who pulls a switchblade from his jacket and opens it.

CUT BACK TO

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

The WEIRD WOMAN is just doing a line of coke. AL enters from he bathroom

AL  
(cheerful)  
Sera wanted me to ask if she might undress at once for you. She has a very beautiful undergarment which she would like you to see.

ANGLE - BATHROOM DOOR

SERA comes in to the room. She smiles and begins unbuttoning her jacket. She takes it off and drops it on the floor and then unzips her skirt and steps out of it. In the BG AL leaves the room.

WEIRD WOMAN  
(strange voice)  
Come here.

SERA walks over to the woman.

ANGLE ON SERA'S FACE.

We see the men watching behind her as the woman does something to SERA, but we cannot see what.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR. LA - MORNING

The bar is dark but through a small window we see that it is a very bright sunny day outside. The bartender reads the Los Angeles times. The bar surface is red vinyl. There are five customers, all single men. One of them is BEN and he is sitting at the bar watching tv. A game show is in progress and the tv sound is loud. BEN finishes his drink and grimaces before indicating to the barman that he'd like a repeat. Barman pours him a whiskey - Cranberry and the CAMERA moves in closer to BEN ending up in a CLOSE UP. BEN takes a big hit from the drink and concentrates on the tv. We hear from the tv sound that it is a word game with a big prize. BEN smiles to himself.

BEN'S POV OF T.V

The talk show hostess, an American beauty, is showing the audience the prizes available in today's game show.

ANGLE ON BEN

As he finishes that drink and asks for another. The camera moves in close on his eyes.

BEN'S POV OF TV.

She turns from the prizes and looks straight into the tv camera which starts zooming into her. At first, what she is saying makes complete sense but then things change...

HOSTESS

(smoky, sexy voice)

Just look at this fucking studio,  
BEN, filled with glamourous  
merchandise, including an extra  
special prize chosen just for you! A  
big, bad, BMW motorcycle, complete  
with saddle bags stuffed with  
thousands of US dollars.

("ooh" from audience)

So, Ben,

(tosses her hair)  
lets find a bar, get drunk and go for  
a ride.

(studio lights dim)

Then we can get a suite somewhere,  
order up a case of champagne while we  
fuck ourself silly.

(CU on males in  
audience doing the  
grunt)

This is it, just for you Ben,

(she unbuttons her  
top and makes her  
nipples hard)

because you've been so patient, and  
because I want to fuck you, take care  
of you, and because there's nothing  
else in the world worth doing.

(section of the  
audience clapping -  
some women dabbing  
their eyes)

Tell you what, Ben, let's go to  
Vegas, the bars stay open 24 hours  
night and day, just you, just me,  
Ben, think about it, alright?

ANGLE ON BEN

Lost in this fantasy.

BEN

I'll think about it.

He looks back at the screen but the show has gone back to what is known as 'NORMAL'. He finishes his drink and then an attack of nausea hits him. He takes a deep breath and rolls his neck and his head. The barman puts down a fresh drink. BEN looks at his own hands.....which are steady.

BARMAN  
You should go on that show.

CUT TO:

INT. SMART BUSINESS SPACE - MORNING

BEN sitting at a desk with a phone wedged on his ear, a cup of black coffee on the desk. The walls are covered with framed film posters and one complete wall has shelves jammed with scripts. He nods from time to time and sometimes says "yes" or "OK" but it becomes clear that there is no-one on the other end. He drinks from the coffee cup. A woman comes up to his desk, a business colleague. She puts a wad of messages down on the desk.

BEN  
Yeah, but what's the back end like?  
By the time we're through with P and  
A the above the line is going to take  
it to about fifteen and with  
something like this....I don't know  
if Disney will go for it...can I call  
you back on this? Okay, ...chow for  
now.

(to the woman)  
Good morning.

WOMAN  
(cautious)  
Ben...Mr Simpson was looking for you.  
I said that you had a Doctors  
appointment. He said for you to go in  
as soon as.....are you OK?

BEN  
(pulling himself  
together)  
I'm fantastic, but I gotta go out  
now...very important meeting, could  
make a couple million for the  
company.

BEN gets up and as he passes her he grabs her and dances a few steps. It is clear that she likes BEN but when his face gets close to hers she smells the alcohol on his breath and she turns away. BEN stops dancing and smiles sadly.

WOMAN  
(tender)  
Ben?

BEN  
What?

WOMAN  
You should go now.

She leaves the room and BEN goes through some routine at the desk. He opens a drawer of a filing cabinet and puts in his whole arm, looking for something at the very back. He pulls out a small Vodka bottle and opens it and then pours the contents into his coffee cup. With cup in hand he leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. SMART OFFICE - DAY

BEN is sitting opposite his boss, Mr. Simpson, who is very upset. He hands BEN a envelope. BEN opens it and pulls out a cheque. He looks at the amount.

BEN  
(genuinely moved)  
This is too generous Peter.

SIMPSON  
(close to tears)  
Well...we liked having you around  
Ben, but you know how it is.

BEN  
(ashamed)  
Sure thing....and I'm sorry.

BEN takes a swig from his coffee cup.

SIMPSON  
(trying to cheer  
things along)  
Well...what are you going to do now?

BEN  
I thought I might move out to Las  
Vegas.

SIMPSON looks puzzled.

BEN  
(continuing)  
The bars never close.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S RED BMW - DAY

BEN drives through Beverly Hills. He pours the contents of a small bottle of Vodka into an empty coke can, puts the empty bottle under the seat and then drinks from the can. He slips a tape into the player and we hear "Lonely Teardrops", by Michael McDonald, one of BEN'S three favourite songs. At a traffic light a cop on a bike pulls up next to him and BEN takes a pull from the Coke can and smiles. The cop nods back at him, the light changes and they both pull away.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA STREET - DAY

BEN comes out of a liquor store with a brown paper bag which clinks. Camera follows him as he walks down the street. He looks at...

BEN'S POV

A girl walking ahead of him in the same direction. She is walking her dog. She is attractive from behind. We hear BEN'S thoughts.

BEN  
(voice over)  
Beautiful. Not just the shape, which is nice, but the whole walk, the feeling, the movement. This girl is pleased with herself. Maybe this is the only art I can appreciate...I don't know if this is good, or bad, but right now she is really beautiful. When I was a boy it would have been really important that she have a very pretty face, to go with this body, I mean, I still would like to see her face, but her beauty is not dependent on her face.

The dog gets interested in something on the sidewalk and she bends down to pull at its collar.

BEN

(continuing)

I wonder what kind of panties she's wearing, shit, that's too specific, but...on the other hand you can never be too specific...but then, the infinitesimal must be, by definition, as infinite as the infinite..

Suddenly the girl stops and BEN catches up with her and cannot resist looking into her face.

BEN

(continuing; voice over)

God, she's so young.

The girl sees BEN and smiles an innocent smile.

GIRL

Hi!

BEN

Hi...

CUT TO:

EXT. BEN'S HOUSE IN SANTA MONICA - DAY

BEN walks up to his house still carrying the paper bag. A young boy of about thirteen years of age is fixing a beat-up bike. Ben greets him.

BEN

Hey Brad...how's it going?

BRAD

Hey Ben. You know anything about gears?

BEN takes a look. The gear mechanism is all bent out of shape. He bends down to have a look. It is clear from the way he deals with this mechanical problem that he is good with his hands. He doesn't try to force anything but he moves the chain and the gear mechanism to get to the problem.

BEN

How'd this happen?

BRAD

I was going real fast down on the beach and something slipped and everything got all jammed up.

BEN

The news is not good kid. This bit here...see there...it's broken. You need a new one.

BRAD

(upset)

How much, do you think?

BEN

I don't know. I'll find out though.

BEN gets up, picks up his bottles and heads for his house. He looks back and BRAD is sitting still by the bike, looking totally dejected. This really seems to upset BEN.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

BEN is naked and the shower can be heard in the BG. The house is austere, only the minimum of furnishing. He pours a large tumbler of Vodka and takes a gulp and then tops up the glass. He turns on the stereo, selects a record - MILES DAVIS, KIND OF BLUE - and puts it on the turntable. He kneels down next to the deck and with complete precision puts the needle on the second track without problem. The music starts and continues through the next sequence.

INT. SHOWER - DAY

BEN in the shower with the glass in his hand

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

BEN shaving with the glass in his hand. He does the area around his mouth first so that he can drink while he does the rest.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Showered and shaved and wearing a smart dark suit BEN looks handsome and normal. He turns the stereo up full and dances by himself whilst watching MTV silent. He tries a turn which is a bit ambitious and loses his balance. In Slow Motion we see him fall.

BEN lies still on the floor and we...

FADE OUT:

FADE IN.

INT. SERA'S BEDROOM. LAS VEGAS - NIGHT.

SERA wakes up in bed next to AL. (The camera is high above the bed looking down.) She is completely drenched in sweat. To get out of bed she would have to climb over AL. She lies still. AL speaks without opening his eyes...

AL  
I missed you Sera. You have been lonely.

SERA blinks and turns her head towards him.

SERA  
I'm older now, Al.

He puts his hand between her legs, over the sheets and grasps her there.

AL  
You have been lonely?

SERA  
(tensing a little)  
I've been all right.

AL  
I will keep you safe, We are both older.

He climbs onto her and mounts her. Familiarity.

AL  
(continuing)  
You have been lonely?

SERA  
(flat voice)  
I am lonely, Al.

AL begins thrusting into her.

AL  
Yes...so am I.

CAMERA moves slowly into a tight portrait of SERA.

SERA

(voice over)

I had a new dress...we were at the fair, daddy bought me an ice cream and I spilt it on my dress. Mom was with Helen and dad looked around first to see if she was watching and then he scraped it all off and threw it onto the grass and then he kissed me and hugged me and told me it was all right...

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S KITCHEN - LATER - DAY

AL is tucking into a hearty breakfast. SERA plays with her food.

AL

(planning his day)

I cannot stay here with you Sera, not in such a small apartment as this. We will have the money - you know how much money I can bring you - and we will find a big apartment.

He suddenly looks up from his food and smiles at her.

AL

(continuing)

You are sly! You knew all along that there was money here, didn't you? Why else would you have run away from me in Los Angeles.

SERA looks down at her plate.

SERA

(V.O.)

Will he hurt me now?

AL

(laughing)

You have nothing to fear from me, Sera. We belong together.

SERA nods and then forces a smile.

QUICK CUT TO

FLASHBACK - BLACK AND WHITE - AL WITH KNIFE - SERA ON A BED.

CUT BACK TO

INT. SERA'S APARTMENT - DAY

AL

You know, I truly belong in wealth and luxury. You will call this morning and book me into a suite at the Sahara where I will use the time to establish new contacts for us.

SERA

Where have you been staying?

AL

With an old friend.

AL drops his fork.

AL

(continuing)

But that is none of your affair.

The mood has suddenly changed and SERA does her best to move along out of these dangerous waters.

SERA

You'll need some money then.

AL

It is, after all, Sera, my money.

SERA rises and goes to a kitchen drawer. Although AL is speaking quietly he is becoming more agitated. There is an inevitability about what follows. A ritual being played out.

SERA

(calmly)

Yes, of course it is, Al. How much do you want?

AL

All of it. I need to buy clothes and things.

SERA comes to the table with the money and stares at AL who doesn't like her looking at him. He's angry that he's let slip how much he is down on his luck.

AL  
(continuing)  
What are you looking at?

He stands up suddenly and hits her. Not too hard but hard enough to knock her back into the refrigerator. His ring cuts her cheek. She slumps to the ground still looking at him.

AL  
(continuing)  
What are you looking at?

AL sits down with shaking hands. He suddenly seems more vulnerable than she. He goes to the window and looks out. Left and then right as if he expects to see something.

AL  
(continuing)  
I need money fast, Sera. I want you back on the street. Tonight.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN SLOWLY - SOUND FIRST

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BEN opens his eyes. The only light comes from the tv. The MILES DAVIS record has got caught on a scratch and is repeating the same phrase over and over again. He looks at his gold Rolex and then fingers the wedding band on his finger.

CUT TO:

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

BEN comes into the club and sits down next to the stage where a dancer is doing her thing. A swimsuited waitress comes to the table.

WAITRESS  
(bored)  
There's a one drink minimum per show,  
I hope you saw the sign when you came  
in, anyway they're supposed to tell  
you. What do you want?

BEN  
(giving her his full  
attention)  
Yes I heard. that's no problem, what  
are my choices?

WAITRESS  
(a little annoyed)  
Everything's three fifty and there's no alcohol.

BEN  
(smiles, thoughtful)  
I see...Okay. What do you have?

WAITRESS  
(now she's pissed)  
No alcohol, you gotta get something else, everything's three fifty. Now what do you want?

BEN  
(frowns, perplexed)  
What do YOU think I should get?

She glares at him and speaks very slowly.

WAITRESS  
None alcoholic malt beverage, orange soda, coffee, sparkling apple cider, water. One drink minimum per show. Everything is three fifty. Now tell me what you want or I'll eighty-six you.

BEN  
(smiles, he's decided)  
Water, I'll have water, please. And just how much is it for you to eighty six me?

She walks away writing W.A.T.E.R and then her speed picks up. BEN watches the stage.

#### ANGLE - THE STAGE

A tough black girl dances in a world of her own, impervious to the men who stare at her. A trio grinds out a dirty blues. A man opposite BEN places a dollar bill on the stage and as the dancer squats down to pick it up he stares between her legs and winks. The WAITRESS puts down a styroform cup and a bottle of water in front of BEN but refuses to look at him.

WAITRESS  
(hostile)  
Three fifty.

BEN puts down a hundred onto her tray.

BEN  
(polite)  
Could I have fives please, keep one  
for yourself.

This throws the waitress for a loop.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM OF STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

BEN drinks all of a fifth of Bourbon. Other guys come and go, pissing against the urinal. BEN offers one of the guys a drink, the pianist from the trio. He takes a shot.

CUT TO:

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

BEN sits next to another man watching the show. On stage a tall blonde dances with her own reflection in a mirror. She kisses herself and slides down the mirror, her legs spread her arms high in the air, her hands sliding down the mirror leave a trail of sweat. BEN turns to his neighbour.

BEN  
To me there is nothing more beautiful  
than the relationship between the  
reflection of a woman and the woman  
who has created it.

NEIGHBOUR  
(completely  
disinterested)

No shit!

CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BVD - LATE NIGHT

BEN is cruising in his car listening to "Lonely teardrops" again. He's looking for a prostitute. He sees a girl but when he slows down she ducks into a doorway.

He looks in his rear view mirror and sees a cop car coming up fast. BEN panics for a second, there is a bottle between his legs. He throws the bottle out of what he thinks is the open passenger window. But it is closed. The bottle hits it and the window explodes. The cop car draws level and cruises alongside him for a while but then puts its lights and siren on and speeds off doing a U turn.

BEN continues and then sees an Hispanic girl and stops. He winds down the window. He is by now almost incoherent.

BEN  
Good evening.

EXT. KERBSIDE - NIGHT

The girl looks up and down the street and then walks over to the car and bends down to the window.

HISPANIC GIRL  
You wanna date? You wanna date me?

The girl's eyes shift constantly from BEN to the street and then back again.

BEN  
(cut to the chase)  
I'll give you a hundred dollars for a straight forty five minutes. You get the room.

BEN shows her the money.

HISPANIC GIRL  
(trying to take him)  
The room is twenty. You pay for it.

BEN laughs.

BEN  
Okay...but only because I think that the concept of surrender fits in with the big picture right now. How about over there.

He gives her a twenty and indicates a motel across the street. She sets off and he gets out of the car. As he does a wave of nausea hits him. He shakes his head violently and then lurches across the street causing two cars to hit their brakes. The camera follows him into the dark parking lot of the motel where the Hispanic girl is waiting.

BEN  
(continuing;  
slurring badly)  
I canremember...if mywifeleffme...or  
Ileff her...bufuckittanyway...

The girl laughs at BEN and says something in Spanish.

Slowly the picture gets darker until all that can be seen is the headlights from the passing cars on Sunset...and then...

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - DAWN

BEN wakes up on the kitchen floor. The fridge door is open and it's light is what lights BEN. Inside the fridge is one green pepper and four bottles of Vodka. Without too much effort BEN feels for his wallet and sees that it is still there, as are his car keys. He closes the fridge door and in the grey light from the window he lies still. the first birds start singing. (The birdsong continues through the following sequence which does not have sync sound.)

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

At the rear of the motel. Next to some garbage hoppers. the Hispanic girl hugging him and kissing his neck. He tries to kiss her on the mouth but she turns her face away.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN.S HOUSE - DAWN

BEN lying on the floor thinking...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

The Hispanic girl kneeling before him unzipping his trousers. Through a gap in the fence we see traffic going up and down Sunset.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - DAWN

BEN lying on the floor thinking...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK.

The girl kneeling before him. She takes his hand and kisses it.

She begins sucking the fingers, taking the whole hand into her mouth.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - DAWN

BEN suddenly sits up and looks at his hand. His wedding ring has gone. He thinks about this for a long while.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. LAS VEGAS - DAY

AL is walking in the hot sun, sweating. We see him through long lens heat haze. The camera wanders into the traffic and we see a yellow Mercedes crawling along behind him, three men inside.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK - DAY

BEN waiting in line to cash a cheque. He goes to the counter and hands over a cheque to the girl.

BANK GIRL  
Okay...four thousand, six hundred dollars...one moment sir...

She looks at her computer read-out.

BANK GIRL  
(continuing)  
...that'll leave five dollars in your account. Would you sign the back of the cheque please?

BEN  
(surprised)  
You couldn't cash it just like it is?

BANK GIRL  
(puzzled)  
I'm sorry sir. Is there a problem?

BEN picks up a pen and tries to sign but his hands are shaking so much that he cannot do it.

BEN  
(embarrassed)  
Well...to tell you the truth, I'm a little shaky right now. I just had brain surgery...why don't I come back after lunch when I'm feeling a little better. We can take care of it then.

He picks up the cheque with some difficulty and exits.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - MORNING

BEN seated at the bar a pile of bills in front of him. The barman sets down a Vodka, picks up the empty glass and takes some bills, shaking his head in disapproval. The TV is on, same game show as before and BEN watches carefully, looking for a sign from the girl, but the show proceeds in its "normal" fashion. The only difference is that the HOSTESS is played by the girl in the bank. BEN grabs the BARMAN'S attention.

BEN  
I think, when I'm done with this I'll have gin and tonic...Bombay gin and tonic.

The BARMAN loses it.

BARMAN  
(angry)  
You should be having coffee. Do you know what time it is? You're a young man.  
(calmer)  
It's none of my business, but if you could see what I see you wouldn't do this to yourself.

BEN is taken aback by the emotion in his voice. In his mind, cynicism, and the desire to cry, fight it out. He holds the emotion back.

BEN  
(looks down at the bar)  
I understand what you're saying...I appreciate your concern. It's not my intention to make you uncomfortable. Please...serve me today and I will never come in here again.  
(cheerful)  
If I do, you can eighty six me.

BARMAN

Sure, sure, I can eighty six you now  
if I want to. Stop fucking with me.  
I don't give a fuck what you do.

He picks up a bottle of gin, fills a glass and slams it  
on the counter in front of BEN and knocks twice with his  
knuckles on the bar.

BARMAN

(continuing)

On the house son.

BEN looks at the TV for a sign - none is forthcoming.

CUS

INT. BANK - DAY

BEN waiting in line again. The same BANK GIRL is there  
and she is dealing with her customers in the same inanely  
cheerful way that the game show hostess dealt with her  
prize winners. She notices BEN waiting and an irritated  
look flashes across her face. BEN studies her. She is  
pretty in an ordinary kind of way. We hear BEN'S thoughts  
as VO. (Or maybe he says them out loud to himself)

BEN

(voice over)

Are you desirable? Are you  
irresistible? Maybe if you drank  
Bourbon with me it would help. Maybe  
if you kissed me and I could taste  
the sting in your mouth it would  
help.

CU on the BANK GIRL as she does her thing, efficiently  
counting money, smiling, perfect teeth framed by a cupid  
mouth. She is wearing a white blouse through which frilly  
lingerie can just be made out.

BEN

(continuing; voice  
over)

If you drank bourbon with me  
naked...if you smelled of bourbon as  
you fucked me it would help...it  
would increase my esteem for you. If  
you poured bourbon onto your naked  
body and said to me...drink this...

Camera moves in tighter on her face as she chats with a  
customer about the weather...

BEN  
(continuing; voice  
over)

...if you spread your legs and had  
bourbon dripping from your breasts  
and your vagina and said drink  
here...then I could fall in love with  
you, because then I would have a  
purpose, to clean you up, and that  
would prove that I'm worth something.  
I'd lick you clean so that you could  
go away and fuck someone else..

BANK GIRL  
Next!

BEN takes a moment to come out of his reverie. He smiles  
and comes to the counter, completely in control of  
himself.

BEN  
I'm back, I've got my cheque...and  
baby...I'm ready to sign.

He flips the cheque over, makes sure she is watching, and  
signs with a flourish.

BEN  
(continuing)  
There...Steady as a fucking rock  
excuse my French,  
(serious)  
Wanna have dinner with me?

She counts the money out and glares at him as she hands  
it over.

BANK GIRL  
I'm glad you're feeling better. Do  
you need validation?

BEN  
If only you knew.

CUT TO:

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY.

BEN throws items into a trolley. Garbage bags,  
firelighters and charcoal lighter fluid.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S KITCHEN - DAY

BEN putting all the kitchen utensils into a large garbage bag. Three other bags are already filled and the kitchen is looking empty.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

BEN is stuffing all the bedding into a garbage bag. Next he opens a drawer on the dresser and begins taking out clothes and stuffing them into another bag. He pauses for a moment to take a drink from a tall glass.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

All the books from the bookcase go into another bag. Then all the records.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEN'S YARD - DAY

BEN pours lighter fluid onto a pile of photographs and then throws a match onto it. It bursts into flame. He throws more stuff on and the fire blazes. A curious neighbour watches from a safe distance, not wanting to get involved.

ANGLE ON THE FIRE.

A water color, a poem to his wife, a photograph of him and his wife, a polaroid of a naked woman, his medical records, his birth and marriage certificate, divorce papers, strips of photographs from booths, postcards from Hawaii.

#### (I might use a section from the book here that describes exactly what it is that he burning because it is quite a difficult thing to convey in pure imagery.)

ANGLE - BEN

Now the flames are high and BEN has to stand back as he throws onto the fire his camera, an engraved box, his wife's left behind clothing, a clock.....

CUT TO:

## EXT. BEN'S HOUSE - DUSK

Fifteen neatly tied garbage bags and BEN'S furniture are stacked up on the sidewalk. BEN comes out of his front door carrying a racing bike. He walks to the neighbours house and places the bike on the porch. We see a label saying "to Bud from Ben". He walks to his red car with a small suitcase and gets in and drives off.

CUT TO:

## EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE WITH ROAD - DAY

A high wide shot shows a small red car making its way across the frame.

DISSOLVE TO:

## INT. CAR.

Through the window we see a dead straight road stretching to infinity. the sunlight is painfully bright. On the soundtrack we hear "Lonely Teardrops" which continues through into the next shot.

DISSOLVE TO:

## INT. CAR - NIGHT.

Same angle through the window but only the headlights and the bit of road illuminated by them...

DISSOLVE TO:

## EXT. GAS STATION IN THE DESERT - NIGHT.

BEN is filling his car. A Yellow Mercedes drives in and stops next to the BMW. Three men get out. They look like mobsters. BEN nods at them and they nod back.

CUT TO:

## INT. CAR - NIGHT - LATER

Same angle through the window but this time we see LAS VEGAS at night as BEN drives down the main drag. An overdose of neon. Ahead we see the light changing but BEN doesn't notice until it's almost too late. The car stops and we see SERA crossing in front of the car. She gives BEN a look of real attitude because he is over the line and she as to change course to cross in front.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL FORCOURT - NIGHT

SERA is talking to AL. A middle aged man gets out of a cab and Al shakes him by the hand and introduces him to SERA. He hands AL an envelope and then SERA and he go into the hotel together. AL looks around thoughtfully before getting into a cab and driving off.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL RECEPTION - NIGHT

BEN waits to check in while the manager explains the house rules to a family of large white people from the midwest. Above the manager's head is the name of the Motel "THE WHOLE YEAR INN". BEN stares at it and then smiles.

BEN'S POV

The sign has changed to "THE HOLE YOU'RE IN".

MANAGER

All rooms to be paid a week in advance, maid service is optional, use of the pool is at your own risk, there is no lifeguard on duty.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - DUSK.

BEN comes in whistling. He is carrying a bag full of bottles. He lays them all out on the table. A wide variety of brands and sizes. He takes each type and puts them in specific places in his room. Some in the toilet tank, some under the bed, some in his suitcase, another in a styrofoam cooler. He fixes himself a drink whilst doing all this.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STRIP - NIGHT

SERA standing alone looking miserable and tough as the traffic goes by. A car door slams and she turns to look at...

ANGLE ON

...BEN, who has got out of his red car and is standing in traffic.

BEN  
Hello!

SERA  
Hello, you shouldn't be standing out  
on the street like that. You might  
get hit.

BEN  
Are you working?

SERA  
(tough)  
Working? What do you mean, working?  
I'm walking.

And she walks a few steps to prove it, stopping on the passenger side of his car. They pause for a moment and BEN is confused. He is quite taken with her beauty but this is not going according to plan. He reaches into the car quickly and picks an open can of beer and drains it before tossing the empty back onto the rear seat.

SERA  
(continuing)  
Isn't it illegal to drink and drive?

BEN  
(laughs)  
That's funny.  
(serious)  
I wonder if you'll take two hundred and fifty dollars to fuck me?

SERA doesn't say anything.

BEN  
(continuing)  
That is, if you'll come to my room  
for an hour, I will give you two  
hundred and fifty dollars.

He bites his lips as he waits for her to respond.

SERA  
(softer)  
You're pretty drunk.

BEN  
(factual)  
Not really. My room's not far. The  
whole year inn. You can drive with me  
if you want...  
(more)

BEN (cont'd)  
(no response)  
...or we can walk...or I'll give you  
cab fare.  
(still no response)  
Whatever you want. I'm in room two.

She touches the door handle.

SERA  
Why don't you give me the money when  
I'm in the car, and I'll drive with  
you.

It takes BEN a moment or two to register that she is saying yes. He comes around and opens the door for her.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

They get in and BEN hands her the money.

BEN  
I'm Ben.

SERA  
Hi, I'm Sera. that's with an E.  
S.E.R.A. Sera.

They shake hands and find themselves grinning at each other. BEN forgets what he is doing for a moment before starting up the engine. They drive in silence for a while and then BEN pulls into the car park of the motel.

SERA  
(continuing)  
I'm sort of curious...if you're  
willing to pay me two fifty...not  
that I mind...I mean, I'm okay with  
that - why aren't you staying in a  
real hotel?

BEN  
We can go to one if you'd prefer.

SERA  
No, this is fine. I was just  
wondering.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

BEN switches off the engine but makes no move to get out of the car.

BEN

Well...I'm here because I'm a drunk  
who tends to pass out at odd hours  
for unpredictable stretches. they're  
willing to leave me alone here  
because I pay in advance. But, you're  
quite right, it is sort of dreary.  
I'll probably move to a hotel soon.  
A room with a balcony to pass out  
on...or off.

He falls silent.

SERA

Umm. We can stay in the car for an  
hour if you want. But I really have  
to go then. It's your time.

BEN

Right. Sorry. I tend to fade in and  
out lately. I'll get your door.

SERA

I guess I do, too.

BEN

You what?

SERA

I sometimes fade out.

BEN

Oh...well, maybe we better  
synchronize our spells...or stagger  
them.

SERA

You were going to get my door.

He gets out and she waits for him to open her door. She  
gets out and he offers her his arm. She takes it and they  
walk into the motel.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

As BEN closes the door, SERA surveys the room.

SERA

(amused)

What this room needs...is more booze.

BEN  
Do you think so?

She turns and looks at him, appraising him. Suddenly she's all business, in control, and BEN likes it.

SERA  
Mind if I use the bathroom?

BEN  
Of course.

She goes into the bathroom.

BEN  
(continuing)  
Want a drink? I'm having one.

SERA  
(os)  
A shot of Tequila, if you can spare it, and a beer.

BEN  
Of course.

BEN smiles, happier than we've ever seen him. He gets her order ready and then he takes a big swig from a Bourbon bottle. He sits on the edge of the bed.

The bathroom door opens and SERA comes in wearing a black bra and panties. She's acting the hooker now, tough and sexy.

SERA  
For two fifty we can do pretty much what you want. You've been drinking so it might be better if I got on top, but the other way's fine too. I have some jelly in case you want to fuck my ass...that's up to you. If you want to come on my face, that's okay too, just try to keep it out of my hair, I just washed it, and my eyes.... it stings.

She walks to the table and downs her Tequila in one and then comes to the bed where BEN is sitting. She kneels, unzips his fly and begins sucking him. BEN watches her, looks at her reflection in the closet mirror, reaches for the bottle and drinks some being careful not to disturb SERA. After a while he puts his hand on her shoulder to stop her.

SERA  
(continuing)  
Do you want to fuck now?

BEN  
(confused)  
Maybe another drink first. More  
Tequila?

SERA  
Okay...whatever.

She takes the bottle and drinks.

SERA  
(continuing)  
What's the story? Are you too drunk  
too come?

BEN  
(sincere)  
I don't care about that. There's time  
left. You can have more money. you  
can drink all you want. You can talk  
or listen. Just stay, that's all I  
want.

She looks at him, confused. She sees a strange look on  
his face. It throws her.

This is a turning point. Both of them are momentarily  
exposed.

BEN lifts the sheet and moves to one side indicating that  
she should come into the bed. She's as confused as he is.  
She gets in with him and he hands her the bottle.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

AL is losing badly at one of the tables. He continues to  
bet though, putting half of what he has left on one  
number. He loses again. He mops his face with a red silk  
handkerchief and places another bet.

ANGLE - SOMEWHERE IN THE CASINO.

The THREE MEN we saw in the desert are walking through  
the casino looking for someone.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

They are both in bed drinking.

SERA

So, Ben, what brings you to Las Vegas? Business convention?

They both laugh and BEN hands her the bottle.

BEN

No, I came here to drink...myself...

SERA

To death?

BEN

Yes, that's right.

He looks at her, she at him, not sure whether to believe him or not.

BEN

(continuing)

I cashed in all of my money, paid my Am Ex card, gonna sell the car tomorrow.

SERA

How long's it gonna take, for you to drink yourself to death?

BEN

I think about four weeks, and I've got enough for about 250 to 300 dollars a day.

SERA

Yes...that should do it. What am I? A luxery?

BEN

Yeah. And your meter just ran out.

BEN looks at his watch.

SERA

It's okay...nice watch. Go on. Talk some more.

BEN yawns. Suddenly deeply tired.

BEN

In LA I kept running out of booze and the store would be closed because I'd forget to look at my watch...so I decided to move here because nothing ever closes and because I got tired of getting funny looks when I would walk into a bar at six o'clock...even the bartenders started preaching.

(yawns again)

Here, everyone's from out of town so no one cares, no one is overtly fucking up....

CUT TO:

LATER.

SIDE ANGLE - SERA is in focus, BEN is asleep.

SERA

(voice over)

I guess I was intrigued by him. He didn't ask me any of he usual stuff. He didn't want to be a social worker. He paid me to suck his dick and whatever. He wasn't judging me and it felt nice.

CUT TO:

BEN and SERA asleep just touching but apart. SERA wakes wih a start and looks at his wrist watch and then leaps out of bed and goes to the bathroom to dress. She goes out of the door

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S HOUSE - DAWN

AL slaps SERA.

AL

Not even five hundred? I give you a full night on the street and this is the best you can do?

SERA

I'm sorry Al, it was slow. I...I just couldn't score.

AL

(losing it)

What do you think you are? A sixteen year old in Hollywood holding out on me? You know better than this Sera.

He slaps her again, hard and quick with an open hand. SERA has a sudden flash of anger.

SERA

Maybe nobody wants to fuck a chick with a cut across her cheek.

(gaining confidence)

That's a new one for you, damaging the merchandise. Best stick to the old knife game, Al. Out of sight out of mind.

AL

You go too far, Sera.

She opens a drawer and pulls out a steak knife, puts it next to him on the table and then bends over the table and pulls up her skirt and offers him her backside.

SERA

Here! Go ahead, Al!

He looks at her scarred buttock. SERA speaks softly, imitating his accent.

SERA

(continuing)

Don't worry Sera...never on the face...now just turn over for me.

AL is nearly out of control.

AL

I could kill you, you know that don't you?

SERA

(fatalistic)

Yes.

AL

Where were you last night?

SERA

I went to the Trop for a few drinks. Like I said, it was a slow night.

AL spits on the floor.

AL  
Work tonight...bring me the money  
when you are done...no matter what  
the hour is.

And he exits, slamming the door behind him. SERA, still bent over the table, lays her face onto the surface.

SERA  
I will, Al.

CUT TO:

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

The proprietor is handing over some cash to AL, whose jewelry is on the counter. He pockets it and as he turns to leave BEN comes in. They pass without taking much notice of each other. BEN takes off his Rolex and shows it to the man.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN BAR, HILTON - NIGHT

A lounge singer belts out a fair rendition of a Tony Orlando number. SERA sits at the bar, an empty seat on either side of her. She watches a younger hooker in the final moments of pulling a dangerous looking man. The girl is aware of SERA without even looking at her. The guy she is with looks around and sees SERA. The girl shoots her an icy look. A man sits next to SERA. A conventioneer.

CONVENTIONEER  
About ready for another drink?

SERA  
Yes, that would be great. Are you here for the convention?

CONVENTIONEER  
Do I look that obvious? My name's Paul.

They shake hands.

SERA  
No, of course not, just a wild guess.  
I'm Sera and that's a Margarita.

The barman is already pouring. The young hooker leaves with her dangerous guy. She pauses long enough to give SERA a nasty smile.

The conventioneer pays for the drink and is a little lost for words. SERA tries to help.

SERA  
(continuing)  
So...are you alone, or are you just using me to make someone else jealous?

CONVENTIONEER  
(laughs nervously)  
Alone. Alone. I'm here alone.

SERA  
(friendly)  
Where are you staying?

CONVENTIONEER  
(suspicious)  
Right here in the hotel, why?

SERA  
(moving a little closer)  
Well....I thought you might be looking for a date.

CONVENTIONEER  
(shocked)  
A date. What, are you a hooker?  
(voice getting louder)  
What do you mean a date?  
(and louder)  
I've got a wife back home. I just came over to talk for a few minutes.

SERA  
(quietly)  
I'm sorry, I guess I misunderstood.  
(looking around)  
Please don't raise your voice. I won't bother you about it again.

CONVENTIONEER  
(calmer)  
Sorry. Look...you seem like a nice girl. I'm just sick of everyone in this town trying to get my money.  
(gets up)  
Here, have another drink, I gotta go.

He leaves. SERA is uncomfortable. People watch her, aware that something has been going on.

The BARMAN comes over to where SERA is sitting. He speaks quietly, not unfriendly.

BARMAN  
Maybe you should give it a miss for this evening.

He walks away. SERA finishes her drink and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STRIP - NIGHT

SERA at work is looking more carefully than usual, hoping to see BEN. She turns down a couple of passing offers from cars but then a huge silver limo pulls up and after some negotiation she gets in.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STRIP - NIGHT

Long lens shot of BEN, very drunk on the street. He falls and lies still for quite a long time before getting up. He walks into the road and tries to hail a cab but none stop. A cop car cruises to a halt and BEN more or less imitates a normal person as he walks out of shot.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

AL introduces SERA to the sadistic man.

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - NIGHT

SADISTIC MAN humiliates SERA. (This might be more effective as past tense VO against a shot of SERA on the street.)

EXT. THE POOL, MOTEL - DAY

BEN dives in and swims a length underwater. He pulls himself out and sits next to the large midwestern family. The father says hello and introduces his family to BEN. They are all very friendly. It's a nice atmosphere around this pool, for a moment BEN even looks healthy.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STRIP - NIGHT

A limo pulls up and SERA gets out. She sees something.

SERA'S POV

BEN sitting at a bus stop, drinking out of a cocktail glass. When he sees her he gets up, a little unsteadily.

BEN

I couldn't remember what happened last time. I was afraid that I might have been rude, or mean to you.

(looks at her)

If I was, I'm sorry.

SERA

No, just drunk...but that's okay.  
Where's your car?

BEN

I sold it this morning. I'm going to take cabs from now on in.

SERA looks up and down the strip.

BEN

(continuing)

Don't run away.

SERA

(defensive)

Why should I? I know you're not a cop, so what is it tonight? Another two fifty to watch you sleep?

BEN sits back down, a little hurt.

SERA

(continuing;  
softening)

What's up?

BEN

I was looking for you tonight. I don't know if you have a boyfriend,  
(thinks)  
or a girlfriend, but if you have some free time...maybe we could...have dinner.

SERA

(tough again)

Are you serious?

BEN

(deadly serious)

I think you know I'm serious. I'll pay you if you like...but I'd like to see you.

SERA  
No, I can't have dinner with you.

And she hails a taxi which stops immediately and she gets in.

SERA  
(continuing)  
Sahara Hotel please.

BEN watches the cab drive off.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR OF SAHARA HOTEL - NIGHT

SERA walks along checking numbers on doors. She finds the right one and knocks firmly.

AL  
(voice over)  
Yes? What?

SERA  
It's me, Al.

The door opens a crack and AL peers out.

AL  
Sera! It's...  
(looks around for a  
clock)  
...it's late.

INT. AL'S ROOM - NIGHT

SERA comes into the room and takes her purse out and counts out seven hundred dollars.

SERA  
Sorry Al...good night...lots of  
tricks...I think things are picking  
up.

AL sits on the bed. He looks unwell and disorientated. His face is covered with a thin film of sweat. He seems to be listening for something because he stops her talking by putting his fingers to his lips. He looks at her and then beckons her to the bed. SERA is nervous. As she walks to the bed she begins unbuttoning her blouse. AL stops her with a wave of his hand. SERA is puzzled and frightened now. AL seems to be deranged.

AL  
Have you told anyone that I'm here?

SERA  
No.

AL suddenly hears something. He grabs SERA'S hand and takes her to the wall. He presses her head to the wall.

AL  
Do you hear that?  
(looks at her)  
they're talking about me.  
(pulls himself  
together)  
Go, Sera.  
(whispers)  
Go. Stay at home, I will call you  
tomorrow.

SERA  
Al...are you....

AL  
(patiently)  
Sera...please go  
(indicates the wall)  
this is very important....and I must  
listen. Now go.

They face each other for a moment and then AL does an almost comic gesture to tell her to go. He hustles her to the door and shoves her out as she is still buttoning up her blouse. He slams the door.

AL  
(continuing; through  
the door)  
Goodbye Sera. Don't come back here.  
I will not see you again.

SERA stands there for a while, almost in shock, and then she begins to walk. The camera follows her as she makes her way down the endless corridor of doors. Ahead of her, two men are walking towards her, checking the door numbers as they make their way. SERA doesn't take them in. They pass and turn a corner. We recognise them as the men from the YELLOW MERCEDES.

ANGLE

The two men have stopped outside AL'S room. The camera pans and we see SERA down the other corridor getting into the eleator.

FADE OUT:

INT. BEN'S ROOM AT THE MOTEL - NIGHT

BEN is lying on the bed watching a game show, drinking.

A coughing fit hits him. He is very short of breath. We see how ill he really is.

There is a tap at the door.

BEN  
No thanks...I'm fine.

The tapping persists and eventualy BEN gets off the bed and unlocks it but keeps the chain on. It is SERA.

SERA  
Still want to have dinner?

BEN stares at her for a while.

BEN  
Yes.

SERA  
I have to change and take a shower first. If you want to come home and wait.

(Ben opens the door)  
We should pick up a bottle of Tequila on the way, I owe you one.

BEN  
You do?

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SERA is in the shower and BEN is sitting at the kitchen table. He gets up and walks around the house trying to get a sense of her. The furniture is very plain and there is a Spartan quality about the house. He looks with interest at the bookshelf which has a good selection of literature.

BEN  
(to himself)  
This is the home of an angel.

SERA  
(O.S)  
You okay out there?

BEN  
Yes. Take your time. I'm fine.

He pours himself another drink.

SERA  
(o.s)  
Pour yourself another drink.

He sits down and she comes in towelling her hair.

SERA  
(continuing)  
You okay?

BEN  
Of course. Wow...you look beautiful.

SERA  
Thank you. What time is it?

BEN  
Don't know. My watch went the way of  
the car.

He holds up his empty wrist for her to see.

BEN  
(continuing; looks up  
and sees her  
watching him)  
I'm rambling, I really like you, you  
make me want to talk...I don't know  
what time it is.

SERA  
I like hearing you talk.  
(businesslike)  
If you feel up to a short walk,  
there's a place around the corner.  
All the food in Las Vegas is terrible  
so the place doesn't really matter.  
How does that sound to you?

BEN  
Do they have drinks?

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

BEN and SERA are eating. He plays with his food eating very little of it. Finally he pushes it away and orders another drink.

SERA  
So, why are you a drunk?

BEN  
Is that really what you want to ask me?

SERA  
Yes.

BEN  
(worried)  
Well, then I guess this is our first date...or our last. Until now, I wasn't sure it was either.

SERA  
Very clever.

SERA thinks for a while and decides to give in to him on this.

SERA  
(continuing)  
First. It's our first. I'm just concerned. Why are you killing yourself?

BEN  
Interesting choice of words. I don't remember. I just know that I want to.

SERA  
Want to what? Kill yourself? Are you saying that you're drinking as a way to kill yourself?

And she leans across the table to be close to him, listening intently. BEN becomes uncomfortable and tries to joke it off.

BEN  
Or killing myself as a way to drink.

SERA continues to stare at him, wanting to know the real answer. He takes a slug from his drink. She sits back.

BEN  
(continuing)  
We'll talk about it some other time  
maybe. Okay?

SERA relaxes and continues with her food. We hear her thoughts for a moment.

SERA  
(Voice Over)  
It wasn't so important to me, I mean he never asked me why I was a hooker and that was impressive. I really liked him. So I decided to just play my part, I mean...it's good to help someone once in a while, it's a bonus to being alive, and that was my plan...to stay alive

BEN  
What are you thinking? Are you angry with me?

SERA  
(decides something)  
Ben, why don't you stay at my place tonight? I mean...look, you're so drunk, or will be by the time we're done. You could sleep on my couch. I trust you. I like you. I hate to think of you in that cheesy motel, you seem so alone...I mean...let's face it, what the fuck are you doing in Las Vegas?

And she folds her arms and grins at him.

BEN  
(overwhelmed by her)  
That's astonishing, Sera. Look...I'm going to move to a smart hotel, tomorrow if it'll make you feel better.

(looks at her )  
Let's talk about tomorrow. Wanna do something?

SERA  
(warmly)  
Sure...tonight. Then please stay at my place.

BEN

Sera...you know I'm not much good in  
the sack.

SERA

It's not about sex, Ben. I'll make  
you up a bed on the sofa. Do it for  
me. We can talk till late and then  
sleep till late. As you know, I am my  
own boss.

BEN laughs loud, the most animated we've seen him and his  
laugh is infectious and SERA joins in. Other diners turn  
to stare at them. They seem like a couple.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

A wide shot. The yellow Mercedes makes its way across  
frame. Left to right.

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S HOUSE - DAY

BEN is asleep on the sofa. As he wakes up he becomes  
aware that SERA is watching him from across the room.  
They smile at each other.

SERA

When is your rent coming up at the  
motel?

BEN

I don't know. How long have I been  
here?

SERA

Three days, no...four days.

BEN

Then it must be due tomorrow. I've  
lost track of time here at Hotel  
Sera.

(sits up)

I'll go and sort it out today. Why  
don't you come with me and we'll find  
a real room for me. You can pick it  
out, a tower on the strip.

SERA

What I meant was that you should  
bring your stuff over here.

(more)

SERA (cont'd)

(Ben looks startled)

What the fuck....we're spending all this time together as it is. there's no reason to blow all your money on a hotel room.

BEN

Sera...

SERA

Let's face it Ben, we're having fun here. I've never done so much talking in my life.

BEN

Me neither.

SERA

So! Let's dispense with the formalities. I believe, completely in your integrity and I want you here...now!

BEN

Sera...you are crazy.

SERA

I'm not too concerned with long term plans, and as far as I can see you don't seem to have any...are we gonna screw around like kids? this is what I want. Why don't you go get your stuff?

BEN

Don't you think you'll get a little bored living with a drunk. You haven't seen the worst of it, these last few days I've been very controlled. I knock things over...I throw up all the time.

(looks at her)

Now I feel really good...you're like some kind of antidote that mixes with the liquor and keeps me in balance, but that won't last forever. You'll get tired of it really quickly.

They sit in silence for a while

SERA

Okay, you go back to your hotel, and I'll go back to my glamorous life of being alone.

She walks out of the room and into the bathroom where she sits on the toilet to pee.

SERA

(continuing)

The only thing I have to come home to is a bottle of Listerine to wash the taste of come out of my mouth. I'm tired of being alone....that's what I'm tired of.

She finishes, wipes herself and flushes the toilet. Pulling up her panties she walks back into the bedroom where BEN is putting on his shoes.

SERA

(continuing)

Look at you! You look like you're about to drop dead. This is nuts. I want you here, and you...all you want to do is crawl off to some dark motel room. Don't you like me Ben?

BEN

(devastated)

Don't be silly.

BEN is unable to deal with the fact that he is absolutely in love with her. He walks out of the room. She follows.

SERA

We gotta decide this...right now. Before we go any further. You either stay here with me, or....

(Ben turns to look  
at her)

...we can't see each other any more.

BEN and SERA look at each other for a long time.

BEN

Sera...what you don't understand is....

SERA

What?

BEN is deeply troubled. He comes to a decision.

BEN

You can never....never...ask me to  
stop drinking. Do you understand?

SERA

(dead serious)

I do. I really do.

(smiles)

Okay, I have to do some shopping,  
alone. You go out for a few drinks,  
and then pick up your things. Don't  
hurry and I'll be back before you to  
let you in. I'll have a key made  
while I'm out.

SERA grabs him in a big embrace that knocks him off his balance and into the wall. She kisses him all over his face and squeezes his skinny frame.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S ROOM AT THE MOTEL - DAY

BEN is packing his liquor into his suitcase. The almost empty bottles he pours into a large cup which he drinks from. The suitcase is now full and BEN suddenly realizes that he hasn't packed any clothes. They are all in a pile on the bed. He talks to himself.

BEN

Maybe this isn't a good idea after  
all.

He tries to put clothes in with the bottles but the lid won't close. He sits on the bed and has an imaginary conversation with SERA.

BEN

(continuing)

Listen angel...the thing is that I'm nuts about you and this is a bad thing...because my real plan is to die here and you were never even part of my plan...but like I said, I am nuts about you...wait a minute, I have an idea, angel.

And he opens the closet and finds some plastic laundry bags which he puts his clothes into.

BEN  
(continuing)  
This way you won't have to deal with  
them...afterwards.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

BEN dumps the plastic bags into the trash hopper.

BEN  
We can go shopping and pick up a pair  
of jeans, and forty five pairs of  
underwear...just throw 'em out each  
day.

CUT TO:

EXT. BANK - DAY

SERA comes out of the bank and puts on dark glasses.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

The pretty, young assistant has just finished wrapping  
two presents. SERA takes out a large envelope, full of  
high denomination dollar bills and pays her.

CUT TO:

# OMIT

54.

SERA

(continuing)

I'll do whatever it takes. I'll go to  
the police...I'll incriminate  
myself...I don't care. Kill me now if  
you want, but when I leave this room  
you can never touch me in any way  
again.

SERA takes a deep breath and raises her hand to knock but  
before she can the door is kicked open and AL is  
standing there.

AL

Come in, Sera

CUT TO:

INT. AL'S ROOM - DAY

AL is looking very rough. His clothes look as though he  
has slept in them. AL is very tired. He sits in a chair.

AL

I have waited for you to come  
that you would come.

SERA

I brought you some money.

AL looks up at her. There is something desperate in his  
expression.

AL

I must leave Las Vegas. You have come  
at last...and now I can leave.

(pathetic)

Always remember that I have waited  
for you.

SERA looks at him and then bends to kiss him on the top  
of his head. She puts the envelope of money on his lap.

SERA

Good-bye, Al. Go somewhere and try  
and get better. This is just history..

And she leaves.

CUT TO:

# OMIT

EXT. SERA'S HOUSE - DAY

Sera's neighbours, a husband and wife, are standing outside her house. They stop her. They are also her landlord.

WIFE

We didn't know whether to call the police or not.

And they indicate the sleeping figure of BEN, asleep in the doorway, clutching a bottle of bourbon, using his suitcase as a pillow.

HUSBAND

He's been there for about half an hour. My wife thought she'd seen you two together, but I thought it best to wait until you got home.

SERA

Yes, he's my friend. I guess he had just a little too much to drink

(smiling  
uncomfortably)

I'll help him inside.

(puts down her packages)

Thanks for your concern, sorry to trouble you.

HUSBAND

(gallantly)

Well, call me if there's anything I can do.

They go to their own house and SERA opens the front door and kneels down next to BEN and shakes him gently.

SERA

Can you wake up?

BEN opens his eyes and looks around with a pleasant, cheerful expression.

BEN

Hi!

SERA

Why don't you go in, and sit down. I have some gifts for you.

BEN

Right....okay...

BEN stands and almost loses his balance. He picks up his suitcase and attempts to pick up her packages as well but she stops him.

SERA  
Don't worry...I got 'em.

BEN staggers in with his case. As SERA enters she looks around and sees HUSBAND and WIFE at the window, still watching.

BEN  
(o.s)  
Want a drink? Great nap. Wanna go out tonight?

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BEN is pouring two drinks as SERA comes in.

SERA  
Seriously, Ben...I need to keep pretty low key around here. Maybe next time you could nap this side of the door. That was the landlord.

BEN  
Oh, I always do. Don't worry. I'm sorry about that, but I got back too early and the door was locked.

SERA  
Of course...  
(reaches into her purse)  
Gift number one.

And she gives him a newly cut key. He takes it and tries it in the lock and then drops it into his pocket.

BEN  
I used to carry a lot of keys, but one by one they all fell victim to the great condensation. Now I have just this one...which is...

And he tails off and stares at the floor. She waits for him to continue and then comes to him and touches him on the arm.

SERA  
Ben,

BEN

Sorry,  
                 (shakes his head)  
I was miles away,  
                 (sees the parcels)  
Ah...more gifts. I have to sit down  
for this.

He strides into the living room and flops onto the sofa.  
She follows.

BEN

(continuing)  
Before we go any further Sera, I love  
that name...S.E.R.A...before we  
proceed onwards, there is something  
I need to say. Okay?

SERA

Okay.

BEN

I've come this far...here I am, in  
your house. I want you to let me pay  
your rent for this month. alright?

And he stares at her as if to say that nothing can happen  
until this matter is resolved.

SERA

Why?

BEN

Because...it's better for me that  
way. Okay?

SERA

Well...okay, but...  
                 (uncomfortable)  
I am planning to go out and do some  
work.

BEN

When?

SERA

Tomorrow night as a matter of fact.

BEN

Do you have an appointment?  
                 (interested)  
You know, I've never really asked you  
about your work. Do you have regular  
customers?

SERA

No, I just work the streets and the bars. Maybe one or two guys have picked me up twice, by chance, but I never make appointments or arrangements.

BEN

And you work by yourself?

SERA

Yes....I used to have a pimp, a long, long time ago, in LA.

They sit in silence for a while.

BEN

Sera...

(thinks about it)

...I hope that you understand how I feel about this. First of all, you're welcome to my money. We can buy a couple of cases of liquor and you can have the rest. But I don't think you're talking to me right now about money.

SERA

(smiling)

No?

BEN

No. I think you're talking about you. I'll tell you right now that I'm in love with you...but, be that as it may I'm not here to force my twisted life into your soul.

SERA

I know that....

BEN

...and I'm not here to demand your attention to the point where it changes your life. We know I'm a drunk....but that seems to be all right with you. And I know that you're a hooker, so if and when you decide to go out to work, whatever your motivation, that's up to you. You're not a fifteen year old on the streets of Hollywood being victimized

(more)

BEN (cont'd)

I hope you understand that I'm a person who is totally at ease with this....which is not to say that I'm indifferent or that I don't care...I do...it simply means that I trust and accept your judgement. What I'm saying is...that I hope you understand that I understand.

SERA

Thanks, I do understand. I was worried about how that would be...but now I'm not. And you should know that included with the rent around here is a complimentary blow job.

BEN

Ah yes...I suppose sooner or later we ought to fuck.

SERA

Whatever that means. Open your presents.

BEN

Once I got beat up in a cat-house, not that it has anything to do with what we're talking about, but I'm reminded of it for some reason. My family was on holiday in Connecticut and I took the train into New York with my uncle. He went to work and I was on my own and I'd cooked up this plan that I was going to make it with a hooker. Someone gave me a handbill in Times Square and I went to the address. Of course, at the time I didn't know how things worked so I happily laid down all of my money at the door, twenty dollars, thinking I was paying for everything. I got inside the room with the girl and she started to explain how everything worked with the tipping and everything and I realized that not only had I thrown away my money, I was also not going to get laid.

(more)

BEN (cont'd)

On my way out I asked for my twenty bucks back, even the girl came out and argued for me, but I could tell from her voice that even she thought it was a lost cause. After all these guys weren't running a non-profit organization. they told me how it was and I started arguing and one of the bouncers gets up from behind the desk and grabs me by the neck and shoves me out of the door and says good-bye. I was so angry with my own ineptitude that I tried to run back in there to grab my money. He grabbed me, held me at arms length with one hand and slapped me back and forth with the other.

SERA

How old were you?

BEN

Fifteen. I woke up at the foot of a flight of stairs outside. they must have carried me down. I can't imagine that they would be stupid enough to throw me down. And they certainly knew what they were doing. All that I had was a bloody nose.

SERA

And they took your money.

BEN

Yeah...but the strange thing is that I didn't want to go back really to get my money...

SERA

Well why?

BEN

Those guys seemed to know something I didn't. I wanted to be a sleazeball apprentice. I knew there was a world of experience in there that I couldn't share and it pissed me off.

BEN gets up and walks to the kitchen and fixes them both a drink as he talks.

BEN

(continuing)

Now I'm softer. I know enough about all of it. Last spring I happened to walk past a house that I had once patronized. There was a cool breeze blowing off the ocean and through the window I could see a bare leg. The girl must have been taking a break between customers. It was a strange moment for me because it reminded me of my mother and despite the fact that I was late for something already I just stayed there, loving the atmosphere of it and my memory and...the reason I'm telling you this epilogue is that I felt that I'd come full circle. I guess I'd better open my presents.

SERA

Where was that house? the one in LA I mean.

BEN

Fifth and Mayflower. You know it?

SERA

Yes. One of my friends was there. I wonder if you ever clipped her.

(hands him the larger  
of the two parcels)

Open this one first.

BEN awkwardly unwraps the present, a large, colourful shirt. A genuine smile comes onto his face.

BEN

Very nice.

(holds the shirt  
against himself)

This should work very nicely with my suit, which, by the way, is the only item of clothing I brought over from the motel with me.

(Sera raises an  
eyebrow)

I thought it would be fun to start again, do some shopping.

SERA

Right..the suitcase was clinking. So what did you do with your clothes? You threw them out, right?

BEN

(laughing)

It's a good habit to get into if you decide to live with a drunk...answer your own question...yes, I threw them into the garbage, which was perhaps immoral, I should have donated them to something worthy, but I wanted to come to you clean, so to speak.

SERA

(smiling)

Nice talk Ben, keep drinking. In between the hundred and one proof breath and the occasional drool, some interesting words fall from your mouth.

(hands him the last present)

Now, try this one.

BEN unwraps the smaller gift. It is a silver hip flask. He is very touched and a little tear trickles down his cheek.

BEN

Well...looks like I'm with the right girl.

(turning it in his hands)

I must say that I'm very impressed that you would buy this for me. I know you wouldn't do this without thinking about it. Funny...you did just what I would have done.

BEN stands and tries the flask in his pocket for fit. It is fine. He walks to the door.

BEN

(continuing)

I'm going to fill it right now.

SERA

Do you want to go gambling tonight? We could go out and play for a few hours.

BEN comes back into the room, takes the flask out of his suit pocket and takes a drink.

BEN

I hadn't planned to gamble...but if you would keep the bulk of my money here, then I could safely blow a couple of hundred bucks.

He takes out all of his money, peels off a few hundreds and then gives her the rest.

BEN

(continuing)

Giving you money makes me want to come.

SERA

Then come! I'm going to change. Watch tv, I'll be half an hour.

And she leaves. there is a slight edge to her voice and BEN is not sure if he offended her or not. He watches through the small angle of the door as she changes. He desires her but is too drunk to make a move.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STRIP - NIGHT

BEN and SERA get out of a cab. The CAMERA follows them into a casino which is teeming with life. He is wearing his new shirt and looks good in it. She is wearing a green dress and mismatched earrings and looks great. They walk and talk....

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

BEN

I like your earrings.  
(changes sides)

I like women who wear mismatched  
earrings.

SERA

Well then...I hope we don't run into any tonight.

BEN

(laughs)

What do you mean?

SERA

Just because I fuck for money doesn't give you cause to start picking up women and leaving me looking silly.

(more)

SERA (cont'd)  
(looks at him)  
I do expect some kind of loyalty  
here.

And she stops and looks at him, smiling but serious.

BEN  
And I only have eyes for you. And we  
both know that you would never become  
romantically involved with a trick,  
right?

They walk around the huge space which is full of people and energy and suddenly BEN grabs SERA and pushes her against a slot machine and kisses her deeply. At first she resists and then she gives in to him and responds. They knock over some change which falls to the floor and BEN pulls away from her for a beat to bend down and scoop up all the change and return it to the bemused player before returning to SERA's mouth for more. They break for air and then BEN leads her towards the bar. As he waves to attract the barman's attention she squeezes his arm.

SERA  
(quietly)  
I love you.

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BEN wakes up on the sofa, fully dressed. A night light gives a soft glow. He rolls off the sofa, landing on all fours on the floor. He crawls to the kitchen, opens the fridge door and takes out a vodka bottle and a carton of orange juice. With difficulty he gets to his feet and finds a glass and pours a drink. He swallows the mix and then stands over the sink in case he has to vomit.

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SERA wakes as BEN comes in and gets into bed with her.

SERA  
How are you doing?

BEN  
Very well...umm...I never expected to  
have to ask this again...but how did  
our evening go?  
(more)

BEN (cont'd)  
I remember getting to the casino...I  
remember kissing you...that was  
really nice...but everything after  
that is a blank.

SERA  
Well - I was prepared for worse, but  
it wasn't so bad. We were sitting at  
the bar, talking about blackjack. You  
seemed just fine, a little drunker  
than usual, but nothing really  
strange, but then your head started  
to droop and I put my arm on your  
shoulder and then, wham, you swung  
your arm at me and fell backwards off  
your stool into a cocktail waitress.  
You smashed everything on her tray,  
it was a real mess. You kept yelling  
FUCK, over and over again.

BEN  
Oh. What did you do?

BEN  
(continuing)  
I tried to shut you up and help you  
to your feet but you kept swinging at  
me - not like you wanted to hit me,  
but more just waving me away.  
Security came and when you saw them  
you stopped yelling. They wanted to  
carry you out and dump you on the  
street but I talked them into letting  
me walk you out.

BEN  
(continuing)  
That's impressive, how did you do  
that?

SERA  
I told them you were an alcoholic and  
I would take you home. I also  
promised that we would never come in  
there again.

BEN  
We?

SERA

Yes, we.

BEN

(holds her hand)

What happened then?

SERA

You were okay for a while so we walked for about a block and then you said you wanted to go home and fuck, but I think even you knew that wasn't going to happen. We got a cab and you asked him to stop at a liquor store, even though I told you that we had plenty at home. In the store you gave the kid a hundred and told him to keep the change. I asked you if you knew it was a hundred, you said you did so I let you do it. We got here, you fell asleep on the couch and I covered you up and came to bed.

BEN

I warned you...

(kisses her hand)

...but I'm sorry.

SERA

Here's my speech...

(kisses his hand)

...I know this shouldn't be acceptable to me, but it is. Don't ask me why. I sense that your trouble is very big...and I'm scared for you...and so I'm doing what I think you need me to do. Falling down in casinos is little stuff. It doesn't bother me. It has nothing to do with us.

BEN

That's amazing. What are you? Some sort of angel visiting me from one of my drunk fantasies? How can you be so good?

She turns away to the wall and curls up like a small girl.

SERA

I don't know what you're saying. I'm just using you. I need you. Can we not talk about it any more, please. Not another word.

He thinks about this. He gently pushes her until she is lying on her front and then he pulls her up her night dress and strokes her naked back. He kisses her in the small of her back.

BEN

Why don't you go back to sleep. I'll go out and buy us some breakfast.

SERA

Be careful.

He stands and goes to the door.

BEN

Don't worry.

He leaves the room and she calls after him

SERA

Ben, I'm working tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - DAWN

BEN is splashing cold water on his face.

BEN

I know.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - EARLY MORNING.

BEN gets out of a cab and walks up to the doorway of a grocery store. It is locked. BEN looks at his wrist and then remembers that he no longer has a watch. He looks around, sees something and exits frame.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO, RESTAURANT, BAR - EARLY MORNING

BEN enters and makes his way to the bar. This is a dirty, dark, place. A drunk is passed out on the floor in a puddle of spilled beer. An ageing blonde in leather hot pants is dancing by herself at the juke-box.

A very drunk BIKER COUPLE argue noisily in a corner, slurring their words. There is not much gambling taking place at the eight slot machines. BEN sits at the bar and the BARTENDER slaps down a paper napkin.

BEN  
A beer and a double kamikaze please.

BARTENDER  
Sure thing. Anything to eat?

BEN  
Not quite yet. First I have to drink myself sober, then...a few crackers, maybe an egg and toast...

The BARTENDER walks away to get BEN'S drinks, BEN continues anyway.

BEN  
(continuing)  
...then I'll go home with the groceries and we'll have breakfast together, and that'll make her feel better about my condition...

BEN is interrupted by the arrival of the BIKER GIRL. She is young, tough and pretty. She puts an arm around him and presses against him.

BIKER GIRL  
Who the fuck are you talking to Mr?  
(laughing)  
Why are you all dressed up, honey?  
My, don't you look fine.  
(runs her tongue around her mouth)  
I am very bored with my date. Would you like to buy me a drink?

BEN looks around and sees the BIKER staring at the two of them.

BEN  
(loudly)  
Do you mind if I buy her a drink?

BIKER.  
Fuck her. I don't care what the fuck you do with her.

BEN  
Maybe I could buy you both a drink?

BIKER.  
Fuck you. Don't fuck with me,  
motherfucker. Fuck off. Leave me  
alone. Go to it, she's waiting for  
her drink.

The BIKER walks over to the slot machines and begins dropping in quarters, never taking his eyes off BEN and the GIRL.

BIKER GIRL  
See what an asshole he is.  
(big smile)  
I'll have a rum and coke.

BEN  
Barman? A rum and coke please.

The GIRL leans with her back to the bar, closer to BEN, who is facing the bar on a stool. Her hand drops from the bar to his crotch and she brings her face closer to his.

BIKER GIRL  
Can I stay with you for a while?

BEN  
You mean move in with me? Isn't this a bit sudden?

BIKER GIRL  
Oh, I don't have a lot of stuff.

BEN  
(smiling)  
I don't think my wife would dig it too much.

She moves to his ear to whisper.

BIKER GIRL  
Maybe we could just go find a room and fuck all day. You wouldn't have to tell your wife about that, would you? I could suck you like this.

And she begins sucking on his lobe. Behind them, at the slot machine the BIKER is still watching. His face fills with a drunken rage.

BEN  
See the thing is this...fucking you is probably the most wonderful...but! I am deeply in love with Sera...

The BIKER throws down his beer can and walks towards the bar.

BEN  
(continuing)  
and it's almost impossible for me to  
imagine being with someone else...

The BIKER arrives at the bar and grabs BEN.

BIKER.  
Now listen, motherfucker, I'm not  
gonna just sit around and watch her  
suck on your ear.

The BIKER is about to hit BEN then holds back. He leans in and puts his face next to BEN'S.

BIKER.  
(continuing)  
Now, I know that she came over to  
you, like she does, so I'm gonna  
pretend that you're innocent and give  
you one chance to walk out of this  
place...right now.

BEN shakes his arm free from the BIKER'S grip. He thinks about it for a couple of beats and then decides.

BEN  
I'm sorry...but she and I have  
decided to spend a few hours together  
in a mo.....

The BIKER punches BEN in the face, sending him crashing off his stool to the floor. His head cracks against the tiled floor. The BIKER walks over to him, picks him up by his shirt front and punches him in the nose. Blood sprays onto his face. The BIKER turns to his girl and slaps her then walks out of the bar. She follows him quickly. The BARTENDER takes a wet towel and walks over to where BEN is struggling to get up, holding his face.

BARTENDER  
You're quite a fighter.  
(gives him the towel)  
This may sound silly, but I'm going  
to have to ask you to leave. It's  
what we do around here when there's  
a fight. Men's room is around the  
back.

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S ROOM - MORNING

BEN brings his head up from the sink and looks at himself in the mirror. His nose is swollen and bruised.

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S HOUSE - MORNING

BEN lets himself in with his new key. He is carrying a big bag of groceries.

BEN  
I'm back.

He walks into the living room and finds SERA reading on the couch. She looks up and sees his face and his bloodstained shirt.

SERA  
Oh no! Oh fuck, Ben, look at your face. You get in a fight? I thought you didn't fight. Goddamit. How do you feel? Wait here, sit down.

She goes to the bathroom and we hear her rummaging in the medicine cabinet.

SERA  
(continuing; off screen)  
Did you stop at a bar?

She comes back into the room armed with bottles and cotton wool

SERA  
(continuing)  
Did you say something stupid to someone stupid?

She goes to work on his face, dabbing an open cut with some mercurochrome.

BEN  
Absolutely not...ow...I was defending the honour of some poor wayward maiden.

She thinks about this for a moment and then kisses him on the forehead.

SERA

Why don't you go and finish this in the bathroom. Take a shower and put on your other shirt. I'll fix breakfast and then we'll go shopping and get you some new clothes. I think this suit must be unlucky.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

MONTAGE - We see BEN and SERA buying clothes for him. He tries on various jackets in bright colours but finally settles for black jeans and a white dress shirt. BEN chooses a pair of crimson socks.

SERA

Very creative. Now we can get you a black bow tie and you can look like one of those casino dealers.

BEN

Okay, but remember that they wear it because they have to. I wear it because I want to. That'll make me look different.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOPPING MALL RESTAURANT - DAY

We see them both in animated conversation. We are on a long lens so we don't hear what they are saying but they both seem happy. They are both drinking. BEN hands her a small, wrapped package.

CLOSE ANGLE

BEN

There was no time for me to write a card, with you breathing down my neck all day, so you'll just have to wing it baby.

He laughs and this induces a coughing fit and he downs his drink and holds up the empty glass to let the waiter know he should bring another.

BEN

(continuing)

Open it.

She does so. It is a pair of onyx earrings. Black onyx set in white gold.

SERA  
(pleased)  
Your colour.

BEN  
I think you should wear one at a time. One of these...and one of your others. In fact, I was going to buy just one, but I didn't think it would fly...as a gift I mean.

His new drink arrives and he takes a swallow straight away.

SERA  
I'll wear them tonight...one of them.

She looks at him, aware of what she has said, wondering how he is reacting. She smiles and BEN takes a deep swallow, finishing his drink. His mood suddenly changes.

BEN  
Yes...you'll be able to feel it, sharp and hot under your ear as one of the brothers is driving your head, face down, into one of the penthouse pillows.

They are both suddenly deeply shocked by what he has said. They sit in silence for a while. SERA is close to tears. BEN gets up suddenly, puts down a couple of bills and walks away from the table. When he is almost at the door SERA gets up and tries to quickly gather up all of the packages.

SERA  
Ben, wait...please wait for me.

ANGLE - THE DOOR.

A large black man stands in BEN'S path and places his hands on BEN'S shoulders.

MAN.  
Maybe you should wait for her sir.

BEN  
Why?

MAN.  
Because...you can hear in her voice  
that she really wants you to.

SERA catches up and the MAN lets go of BEN. BEN takes the packages from SERA and the two of them step out into the mall.

INT. MALL - DAY

They walk together.

SERA  
What was that all about? I don't  
understand any of that.

BEN  
Can we just forget it.  
(imploringly)  
Can we just ignore it? Please?

They stop and look at each other. The PA system gives out an inane message. SERA smiles.

SERA  
Yes...I'll give you that.

BEN  
Thank you Sera.

He kisses her on the lips.

SERA  
Do you want me not to go tonight?

BEN  
No...we already talked about that.

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sera is preparing for work. In the BG we can hear the TV next door. She dresses carefully. Black underwear, stockings, heels, a tight black skirt.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

BEN is watching TV and drinking.

INT. SERA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SERA at the mirror putting on her makeup. Her make-up is more pronounced than we have seen it before.

Everything is more extreme..

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SERA comes into the room. BEN looks up at her and sucks in his breath.

BEN

Wow. Maybe I should follow you around and ask one of your tricks what it's like to sleep with you.

She walks over to him and straddles the chair that he is sitting on.

SERA

They wouldn't know.

She takes his head and places it against her crotch.

SERA

(continuing)

Maybe you should ask me sometime. I'd be happy to show you.

She brings one leg up, like a dancer, and twirls away from him, bringing her leg over his head. She goes to the door.

SERA

(continuing)

I'll be home around three. If you're back by then we can watch tv or something...I guess what I am saying is...that I hope you are back when I get home. Please be careful.

BEN

You be careful too. I'm going to miss you.

SERA

Shall we go away for a couple of days?

BEN

Yeah...I'd like that.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STRIP - NIGHT.

SERA walking and thinking. A car stops and after some negotiations she gets in and the car drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. A STREET - NIGHT.

BEN walking. He loses his balance and falls down. He lies still for a moment.

ANGLE - BEN'S FACE

A big smile appears on his face. He starts to laugh. He gets up, staggers a little and then moves on, laughing in quite a happy way at a private thought. He takes the hip flask from his pocket and takes a slug as he walks away from camera.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN...

EXT. DESERT - DAY

A red car drives across frame. The sun is bright.

EXT. LAKE-SIDE SCENE - DAY

BEN and SERA run naked into a lake. A red rental car is parked just off the road. the doors are open and two piles of clothes are on the grass. The car stereo is on and we hear "Lonely Teardrops" playing.

CUT TO:

UNDERWATER - LAKE

SERA is a very good swimmer and we see that BEN must have been quite an athlete. They look at each other underwater. They're underwater for a long time. BEN exhales. SERA pushes him towards the surface.

EXT. LAKE - DAY.

BEN and SERA come to the surface. BEN has swallowed water and has a coughing fit. SERA hugs him until the fit passes. The camera moves in tighter on them and MUSIC gives the moment a strange chill.

SERA

Don't do that to me. Don't frighten  
me like that.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVE IN MOVIE - NIGHT

The red rental car is parked in a line of other cars. A bad movie is playing. Through the window of the car we see BEN and SERA. He is passing a bottle of bourbon to her. She takes a large swig and passes it back. He kisses her, tastes her lips.

BEN

I like it here with you.

SERA

Let's stay here for a while.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL - DAY

BEN mixes a cocktail for himself, then one for SERA. The camera follows him as he goes...

EXT. POOL-SIDE - DAY

...to the side of the pool to where SERA is sunbathing. He lowers himself unsteadily into a chair but avoids spilling a drop of the drinks which he puts down onto a glass topped table. He is pretty loaded. SERA turns over and moves out of his shadow.

SERA

I've missed the best sun. Why did you  
have to pawn your watch?

BEN

I didn't know I'd ever need it again.

SERA gets up, takes a drink, and then walks to the diving board. As she takes a position at the end she pulls the bathing suit out from her bottom and then does a very natural dive into the pool, swims a length underwater and then comes out near BEN, pulls herself out of the pool in one move and bends down and kisses BEN for a long time. BEN responds and kisses her back. There is no-one else around the pool. The kiss becomes heated and urgent and SERA sits on BEN, making him wet from her. He pushes the top of her suit down and kisses her breasts. She picks up her glass and drinks, letting the alcohol spill from her mouth, over her breasts. BEN drinks from her.

BEN  
(continuing)  
Take this off  
(tries to pull her  
swimsuit down)

SERA  
Maybe we should go inside. Come on.

She stands up, covering herself. BEN stands up, laughing, loses his balance and slips on the wet concrete. He falls backwards, half onto the chair, which breaks, and then onto the glass table. The table goes over and it, and the glasses all shatter on the concrete. BEN falls onto the broken glass and cuts himself all over his back and his arms. Glass goes into the pool. Blood mingles with the water on the steaming cement.

BEN  
Whoops.

SERA picks up her towel and lays it down next to him. She kneels and helps him up, trying to pull out the little bits of glass sticking to him. BEN stands unsteadily.

BEN  
(continuing)  
I'll go and clean up. Perhaps you  
could take care of this.  
(indicating the mess)

He walks to their room and SERA begins carefully picking up the broken glass. The desk clerk appears with a broom and a dustpan.

DESK-CLERK  
(cheerfully)  
Everybody okay?

SERA  
Yes, fine. Don't worry, we'll pay for  
the chair, and I'll clean all this  
up, the pool too.

DESK-CLERK  
Don't worry.

He begins sweeping the broken glass into the pan,  
cheerfully ignoring SERA.

SERA  
You seem prepared for accidents.

DESK-CLERK

(still smiling)

Yeah...we get a lot of fuck-ups here.  
Now, you two keep your loud talk and  
your liquor to your room.

(looks at her for  
the first time)

Check out first thing tomorrow and  
after that I don't want to see either  
of you here again. I don't need you  
paying for the chair or cutting your  
pretty hands on the glass. Let's  
leave it at that. See ya in the  
morning.

Nodding firmly he goes back to the mess, indicating that  
the conversation is over.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

SERA comes into the room.

SERA

Ben?

She sees that he is already asleep on the bed, his half  
naked body is covered with countless bits of bloodstained  
tissue. The image has an almost religious feel to it. The  
tv is on and a SIT-COM is playing. Something funny  
catches SERA'S attention and she laughs and sits on the  
bed next to BEN.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN.

INT. SERA'S BEDROOM - LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

BEN wakes from a dream. He is fully clothed. He is very  
agitated.

BEN

Sera?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

SERA is cooking.

SERA

I'm in here. You probably don't want to hear about it right now, but I bought some plain rice. I thought it might be something you could eat. So if you get hungry later on, just let me know.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

BEN sits up. He is in a bad way, suffering from withdrawals. His hands are shaking violently. He stands up and staggers into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

BEN opens a cupboard door and takes out two bottle of vodka and goes towards the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM

BEN'S hands are sweating and it is difficult for him to keep hold of the bottle as he drinks. He gets most of it down and then he hunches over the sink and immediately vomits. He takes the second bottle and tries again.

CUT TO:

ANGLE - SHOWER

Still holding the bottle, BEN stands in the shower. He drinks some more and closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

BEN enters, smartly dressed and smiling...

BEN

I think I'm ready for rice!

CUT TO:

DINING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

BEN and SERA sitting opposite each other. He has a bowl of rice which he is pretending to eat in between sips of vodka. She has a bowl of vegetables and rice. She sits, silently for a while and then puts down her chopsticks.

SERA  
You're pretty sick.  
(he looks away)  
What are you going to do?  
(she folds her arms)  
I want you to go see a doctor.

He thinks for a while and then turns to meet her gaze.  
They look right into each others eyes.

BEN  
Sera...I'm not going to see a doctor.

SERA continues to look at him almost defiantly.

BEN  
(continuing)  
Maybe it's time I moved to a hotel.

SERA  
And do what...rot away in a room?  
(becoming angry)  
We're not going to talk about that.  
Fuck you! I will not talk about that.  
You're staying here. You are not  
moving to a hotel.  
(close to tears)  
One thing....one thing...this is one  
thing you can do for me. I've given  
you gallons of free will here! You  
can do this for me.  
(leans right forward)  
Let's face it. Sick as you are, I'm  
probably the only thing that's  
keeping you alive.  
(stands up)  
I have to go to work now.

BEN doesn't say anything. He just stares a hole in his  
bowl of rice.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT.

BEN recklessly bets two hundred dollars at the craps  
table

....and wins. As he leans forward to collect his winnings  
he sees...

ANGLE

...a blonde hooker in a very low cut outfit. She smiles at BEN and walks around the table to pick him up.

HOOKER

Hey...that was quite a play. You in for the convention.

BEN gets straight to the point.

BEN

I need to fuck you for about an hour.

She is a little taken aback, but smiles and leans in close to be a little bit more discreet.

HOOKER

Straight fuck is two hundred, but I doubt you'll be awake for an hour.

BEN

How much to lick your pussy?

HOOKER

Sorry...only my boyfriend can do that.

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT.

SERA lets herself in, looks around and opens the bedroom door.

ANGLE

In one fluid movement the naked hooker gets off the semi conscious BEN, pulls her dress over her head, and walks past SERA. Moments later we hear the front door slam. BEN comes to and looks at SERA. He is more or less unaware of what has just happened,

BEN

Hello...

ANGLE ON SERA

Her eyes are wet.

SERA

There are limits.

BEN  
(remembering)  
Yes...I guess I knew that.

She drops her purse and slides to the floor weeping quietly. BEN gets out of the bed. He picks up the bottle on the bedside table and stands.

BEN  
(continuing)  
Perhaps I could crash on the couch for a few hours before looking for a room.

He walks out of the room and closes the door. Camera moves in on SERA. She covers her face with her hands.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN

ext. street SCENE - BRIGHT DAY

BEN coming out of a liquor store with a large brown bag.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET SCENE - NIGHT

SERA getting out of a car. The car drives off. SERA examines her face in a pocket mirror. Puts on more lipstick.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

BEN is on all fours in the bathroom trying to vomit. His thin frame is heaving. Bottles are everywhere.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

SERA comes to an elevator and waits. She is wearing a thin black top without a bra. A big man in a white stetson stands next to her. He looks at her and grins. She smiles, coldly. He takes out of his pocket two black discs, hundred dollar chips, takes one in each hand and deliberately places each one against her nipples. Other people see this and stop and watch. SERA looks down at his hands and stares until the man becomes uncomfortable.

STETSON MAN

What's the problem, honey,...you on  
strike?

And he walks away laughing.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STRIP - NIGHT

Three college boys with beer bottles walk the strip. They are all wearing the same numbered jersey. Nice middle class boys looking for an adventure. They see SERA and go into a huddle before walking over to her.

TALLEST COLLEGE BOY

How much will it cost us to fuck you?

The other two boys titter. SERA starts to walk away and then hesitates.

SERA

Sorry guys, but I don't know what you mean. Anyway I never date more than one guy at a time.

SMALLEST COLLEGE BOY

Come on...we got money...show her the money.

The other COLLEGE BOY gets out his wallet and opens it to show her. SERA hesitates, not somehow comfortable with the situation, then goes ahead.

SERA

How much of that money did you guys want to spend?

TALLEST COLLEGE BOY

How much you want? How about two hundred for an hour?

SERA

(becoming annoyed  
with them)

Don't your friends talk?

(no answer)

Try three hundred for a half hour.

OTHER COLLEGE BOY

(nervous)

Three hundred for the hour.

SERA

Okay...three...and we'll see how it goes. Where are you staying?

TALLEST COLLEGE BOY

The Yukon, room twenty four.

SERA

I'll see you there in fifteen minutes. You can pay me then. Why don't you all take a shower while you're waiting.

OTHER COLLEGE BOY

A shower? In fifteen minutes?

SERA

Don't you guys live in a dorm or something? Didn't you ever have two dates in one night?

(they all smile now)

Look...I'll only need one of you at a time. RIGHT? UNDERSTOOD? So...the other two can shower while I'm there. Okay?

They walk off in a huddle, giggling. Three small boys.

CUT TO:

EXT. YUKON MOTEL - NIGHT.

SERA drinks from a beer bottle as she approaches their room. She talks to herself.

SERA

Where are the boys this weekend, Frank? Why hell, Charlie, I sent 'em off to Vegas to learn the one thing I couldn't teach 'em.

She looks at the numbers and finds the room. She knocks and a moment later TALLEST COLLEGE BOY opens the door in his jockey shorts.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

SERA steps in. One boy is coming out of the bathroom wearing a towel and the third is sitting in a chair smoking a joint which he passes to the boy in the towel. The atmosphere is weird and SERA is suddenly alert. The TALLEST COLLEGE BOY hands her the money. He is very well built, a football player. SERA hesitates, holding the money.

TALLEST COLLEGE BOY closes the door and then leans against it. They are all staring at her now. No-one says anything. SERA smiles suddenly and puts the money in her purse. All business.

SERA

Okay...where's the bedroom, and who's first?

They all look at each other.

SMALLEST COLLEGE BOY

I want to fuck her in the butt...  
(looks at the others)  
..you too, right?

SERA

Forget that. No one's doing that.  
You'll all go straight, one at a time. If you want I'll suck you instead, but that's all. Then I'm out of here.

SMALLEST COLLEGE BOY

(looking at TALLEST)  
You said I could fuck her in the butt.

OTHER COLLEGE BOY

Shut up.

SMALLEST COLLEGE BOY

(shouting)

It's my money.

SERA

That's it...take your money back, I'm leaving.

The SMALLEST COLLEGE BOY gets off he bed and comes over to SERA.

SMALLEST COLLEGE BOY

No...don't go.

The big boy is still standing in front of the door and things are getting strange. SERA loses her cool .

SERA

(to SMALLEST COLLEGE  
BOY)

Maybe you'd like to fuck one of your friends in the butt instead.

The room goes very quiet. The kid tears up. SERA tries to back-pedal.

SERA  
(continuing)  
Hey...I'm sorry...

The kid suddenly punches her hard in the face, knocking her to the ground.

CUT TO BLACK

QUICK FADE IN...

CLOSE UP on SERA'S face pushed into a bloodstained pillow, her body being pounded from behind. The naked legs of two of the boys around her. We hear voices, filtered, from a long way off...

VOICE  
Go on...fuck her ass..

OTHER VOICE  
Look at me...look at me...look at me.

A hand comes into frame and pulls her head up by the hair. A pair of legs moves in. there is a sound of a punch...

FADE OUT:

FADE IN

SERA'S body on the floor. In the background trousers being hastily pulled onto legs. The boys exit with sport bags. The last one turns out the lights and closes the door

FADE OUT:

FADE IN

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAWN

In the half light SERA gets up and walks with difficulty to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAWN

She clicks on the mirror light. Her face is awful. One eye is swollen. almost shut. Her top lip is cut.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. CAB - EARLY MORNING

SERA gets into the cab with considerable difficulty and sits painfully. The cab driver is a cynic.

CAB DRIVER

What's the matter honey, get a back door delivery you weren't expecting?  
You gonna be able to pay the fare?

Without speaking she takes out a twenty, leans forward and drops it on the front passenger seat. He drives. Looks at her in the mirror.

CAB DRIVER

(continuing)

Oh, don't wanna talk to me unh? Well  
don't take it out on me, I'm just  
covering my ass. What the hell do you  
expect, sluttin' around like  
that...dressed like that. You oughta  
be glad the creep didn't nail ya

CUT TO:

EXT. SERA'S HOUSE - MORNING

As the cab drives off SERA walks slowly to her door. Her LANDLORD'S WIFE passes and takes in her face.

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S SHOWER - DAY

SERA is slumped on the floor of the shower, her arms hugging her legs, the water pounding down on her.

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S HOUSE - DAY

SERA opens the door and we see the LANDLORD. Behind him, on the sidewalk we can see his wife. He is embarrassed.

ANGLE

SERA, wearing dark glasses. She looks terrible. Her mouth is swollen and some of the bruising around her eye is visible.

LANDLORD  
I'm sorry...but we'd like you out by the end of the week.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHOLE YEAR INN - DAY

SERA gets out of a cab and goes into reception.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - DAY

The desk clerk is wearing a shirt of BEN'S that we recognise from an earlier scene.

RECEPTIONIST  
I'm sorry ma'am. He never checked back in.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEVEN-ELEVEN - DAY

SERA is sitting on a freshly painted red kerb. She smokes a cigarette and doesn't give a damn that her short skirt is somewhat revealing. Opposite her a bum is sleeping on the pavement. For a moment it looks like BEN. The camera comes in tight onto her face. She looks more lost than we've ever seen her.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

SERA comes in and the camera follows her as she makes her way to the bar. She has covered up much of the bruising with makeup but it is still pretty obvious. In WIDE SHOT we see her strike up a conversation with the man next to her at the bar.

CLOSE SHOT - THE BAR

A hand comes into shot and grips her arm firmly. We see that it is a casino security guard.

SERA

Let go. What's the problem.

SECURITY GUARD

We don't want you in here, that's the problem. Let's go.

And he jerks her arm. People are watching now.

SERA

Don't worry...if you don't want me in here, then I don't want to be here. Just let go of my arm and I'll walk out of here.

SECURITY GUARD

Yeah...we'll both walk out now.

He steers her firmly across the floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASINO - NIGHT

They reach the sidewalk and, without relaxing his grip he grabs her between her legs with his free hand and says in her ear...

SECURITY GUARD

Next time it won't be so fucking easy.

...and he pushes her towards the street and walks back into the casino. SERA is shocked. She looks around and the group of people who have stopped to watch the event, move away.

CUT TO:

INT. SERA'S HOUSE - DAY

SERA is throwing clothes into a suitcase. The phone rings. She thinks about it for a long time and then it stops. She carries on packing and then the phone rings again. She picks it up.

SERA

Hello...hello....

(suddenly alert)

Ben? Where the fuck are you...give me the address.

CUT TO:

INT. CAB - DAY

The driver is black and friendly. The radio drones quietly. A religious programme. The rev' Ike is taking listeners calls. Citizens disgusted about the vice on the strip.

BLACK DRIVER  
What in hell happened to you Miss?

SERA  
Oh...it was an arguament.

BLACK DRIVER  
Leave him Miss. Pretty girl like you could get any man that you wanted.

INT. BEN'S MOTEL - DAY

The door opens, BEN is naked. His body looks bad. Leaving the door open he retreats to the bed.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY

SERA comes in, closing the door behind her. The shades are drawn and the room is gloomy. BEN has got back into bed. She comes to the bed and sits.

SERA  
Ben...I've been looking for you. Have you been here since you left? It smells bad in here. It's so dark.

She clicks on the bedside light and is truly shocked by his face.

SERA  
(continuing)  
Oh Ben...you look so very sick...my love...you're so pale.

She goes to the bathroom and returns with a wet face cloth. She wipes his face.

BEN  
I wanted to see you...you're my angel.

He sits up painfully and finds a bottle, summons up some last strength to drink. His entire body shudders as he drains the bottle. He puts it down and focuses on her for the first time. Sees her damaged face.

touches her face, looks at her questioningly.

SERA  
Something went wrong...I'm okay.

BEN begins to cry and that sets her off.

BEN  
I'm sorry I put us assunder.

She shakes her head, unable to speak for the moment. She gets into bed with him, kissing his face. She caresses his whole body which is shaking, possessed by an uncontrollable fever.

BEN  
(continuing)  
See how hard you make me, angel.

She excites him with her hand, kissing his face gently. When he is about to come she straddles him and brings him inside. As he comes he opens his eyes wide and looks at her.

BEN  
(continuing)  
You know I love you...yeah?

SERA  
(she comes)  
Yes.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN

SERA is sleeping. A sudden gasp wakes her. BEN is having a spasm. Suddenly his body relaxes. He turns his head, opens his eyes wide and looks straight at her.

BEN  
Oh...I'm so sorry...

He smiles and then turns his head away. He is very still.

SERA  
Ben...Ben.....Ben?

DISSOLVE TO:

93.

INT. BEN'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

In the darkened room we can just make out SERA sitting on the bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET NEAR MOTEL - NIGHT

SERA walking. A paramedic van goes past with it's lights flashing. The soundtrack is empty - silent. We slowly fade in on "Lonely teardrops" and titles start to roll

THE END

MIKE FIGGIS ~~15-4-93~~

1-1-94